BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Marie BLAHUTKOVÁ, Michal CHARVÁT

Abstract: The Article deals with problems of bullying in schools at children of older school age. Via questionnaire survey we ascertained the occurrence of bullying in selected schools of Brno-Province region. We found out bullying methods are really implemented among pupils of the selected schools.

Keywords: aggressivity, bullying, hostility

Introduction

Bullying in schools is as old as the existence of schools. Nevertheless, contemporary bullying increases by means of increased amount of cases of bullying, lowered age limit of aggressors and increased brutality and its refinement (Bendl, 2003).

Failure, pain, loss and other negative features in life of children may lead to transcendence. However, the transcendence may achieve large dimensions so that negative action is invoked (Hogenová, 2001).

Human beings are dynamic personalities that develop and change gradually. Their dynamics is demonstrated via the function of ego (self), which is a theoretical construct explaining the organization of personality, functioning as a relatively complex unit. Motifs of human activity are of great importance. Maintenance of a specific inner psychic balance, defined by feeling of self-value, represents the meaning of human behaviour.

Mechanisms of defence against anxiety and of self-delusion appear gradually (Nakonečný, 1995). Human beings are multifarious creatures and the plurality consists both from positive and negative features. In contemporary post-modern society the maximal performance is emphasised. At the same time the performance in contemporary society represents texturizing the area of possible behaviour of other people, i.e. organizing their own freedom (Hogenová, 2002). Nevertheless, not everyone is able to focus just on the performance and therefore significant differences among approaches to problem solving appear already at individuals of children age.

Kolář (2000) states bullying in schools is like an epidemic that has already been substantiated by results of various researches, conducted by specialists in different types of schools in more localities of the Czech Republic. For all that most teachers do not consider bullying a problem. And if they do, they usually concede it as a problem of

other school than their own, which is a deep mistake. Bullying is a problem of most schools. That means bullying comes up sooner or later everywhere. Accurate charting of bullying is rather demanding as bullying may represent a covert problem for a long period of time.

We have no information about the majority of bullying cases in spite of the fact that mild forms of bullying touch a significant part of school population. High percentage of such mild form cases proceeds into the advanced stage of bullying.

As long as these questions start emerging already in children age period, they may be a starter of negative behaviour of children which is often labelled "aggressivity" and included into behaviour disorders of children age. Withal, a child suffering from behaviour disorders in school may prove characteristics of a calm, communicative and sociable person. Negative impact on an individual during a longer time period may cause consequential behaviour disorders that often lead to a socially-pathologic behaviour of a child. Inner negative feelings of a child may display as features of hostility.

According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic bullying is any kind of behaviour the intention of which is to harm other individual, to threaten or terrorize other pupil or even a group of pupils. It is a goal-directed and usually repeated usage of violence by an individual or a group against other individuals or groups of pupils who are not able to defend themselves (or they cannot defend for various reasons). It includes both physical attacks, having form of beating, blackmailing, burglaries, destroying other person's belongings and verbal attacks such as expletives, gossiping, threatening and humiliating. It may also have form of sexual harassment or abuse. Bullying may appear indirectly as a conspicuous marginalization and ignoring a pupil or pupils by classmates or other group of pupils. The danger of bullying resides in its seriousness, long-term character and often in whole-life consequences in the area of both physical and mental health.

Kolář (2000) divides bullying into five groups:

First stage (birth of ostracism)

The circumstances of birth of bullying may be quite common and furtive. On the contrary to the common opinion of population there are no special conditions needed as well as no necessary presence of a pathological sadist or absence of discipline. In each school group individuals who are less influential and favoured are to be found. All pupils who find themselves at the edge of the group suffer from so called "ostracism". It is a mild, mostly psychical form of violence, when man does not feel well, is not favoured, is not reputable, the others refuse him and gossip about him, etc. Such a child starts receiving a role of the oppressed and brushed off and he cannot defend himself effectively. The first stage of bullying is hardly observable.

And such a situation is a rudiment of bullying that may easily grow into the next stage.

Second stage (physical aggression and tightening up the manipulation)

During this stage the psychical pressure grows into the physical aggression. The aggressor starts feeling the taste of power and what delight it brings him to beat, torture

or humiliate somebody else. Attitude of classmates towards bullying may significantly influence the following development of bullying. In case of non-existing friendships, negative attitude to violence, and positive moral characteristics, the very last moral scruple is conquered and bullying is applied to a greater extent.

Third stage (the key moment + creation of the core)

Practically, this stage is crucial. There exists still a possibility of forming a strong positive influence of a group that would weaken the influence of the attacking core which is slowly being created. Provided that no positive influence comes, the aggressors begin to cooperate and bully the most suitable victim systematically. Those who have displayed as a suitable target of ostracism happen to be victims of the third stage of bullying as well.

Fourth stage (majority of the pupils accept the norms of aggressors)

The activity of the core of aggressors continues. Their impact is very strong, so that the whole group accepts their norms and rules. Usually there are not many individuals to oppose such a pressure. The group seems homogenous outwardly, but discomposes inwardly. Even calm and well behaved pupils start behaving in a cruel way and take part in torturing the victim, feeling gratification. They do so not to become the tortured ones.

Fifth stage (totality, so called complete bullying)

The fifth stage of bullying may be found in prisons, military institutions and educational institutions for youth. Norms of aggressors are generally accepted and respected by all. Totalitarian ideology of bullying is established. Aggressors are considered and respected as leaders, supermen, etc., which is the characteristic feature of this stage. Victims are considered cotters, servants, slaves, etc. Aggressors lose the remainders of scruple and sense of reality. Members who have originally not agreed look on with interest now or even take part actively.

Sometimes a pupil with excellent school results who helps willingly the teacher and has the teacher's support becomes the initiator of bullying. The teacher trusts him and supports him. At this stage the victim runs into illness, is often absent (without excusing himself), avoids the school area and in the worst possible case he ends up with a psychical collapse or suicidal attempt.

Objective, hypotheses and tasks of the research

The objective of our research was to ascertain the up-to-date situation of bullying at a selected group of pupils of older school age in schools of Brno-Province region. The research included ascertaining the attitudes of adolescent towards the features of bullying in school.

The following hypotheses to fulfil the objectives of the research have been established:
1. Contemporary globalization brings also negative features such as bullying. We supposed that among pupils of older school age bullying will be proved.

2. Bullying is more often attributed to men. Therefore, we supposed that bullying in school will be detected particularly in boys.
3. School area is often connected with bullying. We supposed bullying in adolescents will appear rather in school area than in out-of-school area.

The following tasks to fulfil the objectives and hypotheses have been established:

-   to address a selected group of adolescents in school area and ascertain the situation of bullying via questionnaire survey,
-   to compare the differences of bullying in girls and boys,
-   to ascertain the stage of bullying in school and out-of-school area and to compare these stages.
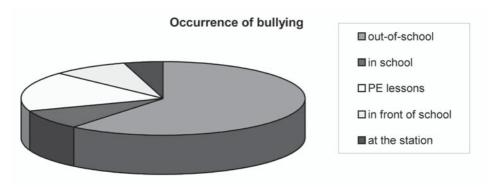
Methodology

Seven classes of pupils of primary schools and students of lower grades of grammar schools of Brno-Province region, aged 12–15 years, have been selected. Altogether, 151 respondents (81 boys, 70 girls) have been interviewed via the questionnaire. Anonymous non-standardised questionnaire of bullying (Blahutková, 2006), containing 31 questions, has been applied. The first area of questions focused on basic information about the tested person, climate of the class and friendships. The second group of questions focused on bullying in general (knowledge of the terminology, experience with bullying and aggressors, ability to announce ascertained facts). The research has been conducted by one person who gave the interviewees the same instructions in all tested schools.
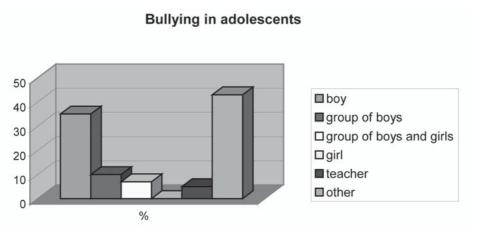
Results and discussion

While ascertaining the general characteristics of school and class climate, 95 % of the addressed students admitted contentedness, concerning the question whether they attend the right class. While asking about a good class team, only 65 % of pupils have been contented. More than two thirds of pupils think bullying appears in school area and the same amount of the addressed think the teachers would reveal it. One third of the addressed have never witnessed bullying in school. 17 % of the addressed have encountered bullying more often. Boys have been harmed more often (51 %) than girls (17 %). In most cases, bullying appears in out-of-school area but also in school area, PE lessons and during the school breaks (see pict.1).

Aggressor who harmed other pupils was usually represented by a boy (35 %), less often by a group of boys (22 %) and sometimes by a mixed group of boys and girls. In exceptional case the teacher has been included in bullying (5 %) as well as an unknown adolescent (see pict.2).

Occurrence of bullying

- out-of-school
- in school
- PE lessons
- in front of school
- at the station

Picture 1: Occurrence of bullying in selected groups of adolescents

Bullying in adolescents

- boy
- group of boys
- group of boys and girls
- girl
- teacher
- other

Picture 2: Indicated aggressor

Frequently, school bullying takes place in a dressing room, in the area of toilets, on the way to or from school. In the out-of-school area bullying is implemented at stations (while waiting for means of transport as marginal part of the addressed have to travel to school daily), further on in pubs and leisure time centres. One third of the addressed have admitted that some of the classmates attempted to help the victim. One third admitted no-one helped the victim. The rest of the interviewees have not answered the question.

While ascertaining the regularity of bullying one third of adolescents admitted they had been harmed for several months regularly, though minimally twice a week. In three cases the answer was "very often" and even "whenever we met"!

Majority of the addressed did not announce the bullying case, mostly because of having fear of punishment implemented by the aggressor. In last questions area we ascertained whether the interviewees have ever harmed anyone or at least felt about harming. Surprisingly, 22 % admitted having harmed somebody. 8 % keep harming somebody and more than one half of respondents would like to do so. Three pupils have admitted that repeated harming their classmates brings them feeling of gratification.

After the questionnaire research we discussed with the pupils the features of bullying in public and in school. In many cases the respondents encounter bullying but they avoid a direct contact with it.

Conclusions

After implementation of our research we may state it is more than necessary to solve problems of bullying and aggressive behaviour in schools and especially in such cases where bullying and violence applied on individuals or group of children appears. We assume bullying shall be reduced via the following recommended methods:

For parents:
1. Take in your children and their behaviour.
2. Speak to your children regularly (also about his/her activities throughout the day)
3. After ascertaining violent behaviour, find out what exactly had happened.
4. Never lighten the situation.
5. Ask for redress in school.
6. In case the school is not willing to perform the redress, ask a specialist for help.

For teachers:
1. Take in your pupils and their unconcern and reclusive behaviour.
2. Ascertain gradually the situation of aggressive behaviour of children in class (during breaks, in lunch break, while moving to other classrooms, dressing rooms, etc.).
3. Solve features of aggressive behaviour immediately, with a clear conclusion.
4. Social climate of a class is a means of regulation of hostility features.
5. Common emotional air (positive).
6. Support of family and the closest persons (friends, teachers, trainers).
7. Education towards fair play.
8. Do not overtax your pupils.
9. Educate towards regarding authorities and positive strengthening the self-consciousness.
10. Praise unsuccessful pupils whenever possible.

We assume the increasing problems with behaviour disorders of school pupils partially reflect the modern society. Many children perceive different social levels. Media influence the youth at a great extent as well – especially films and PC games and so do the attitudes of parents. The lack of time at parents leads to increasing self-promotion of children, which often develops into bullying.

Literature:

BENDL, S. *Prevence a řešení šikany ve škol.* Praha: ISV, 2003, 197 s. ISBN 80-86642-08-9

HOGENOVÁ, A. *Areté základ olympijské filozofie.* Praha: Karolinum, 2001, 164 s. ISBN 80-246-0046-3

HOGENOVÁ, A. *Kvalita života a tělesnost.* Praha: Karolinum, 2002, 304 s. ISBN 80-7184-580-90

KOLÁŘ, M. *Skrytý svět šikanování na školách.* Praha: Portál, 2000, 256 s. ISBN 80-7178-409-5

NAKONEČNÝ, M. *Lexikon psychologie.* Praha: Vodnář, 1995. 397 s. ISBN 80-85255-74-X

ŠIKANA VE ŠKOLE

Souhrn: Článek se zabývá problematikou šikanování na školách u dětí staršího školního věku. Pomocí dotazníkového šetření jsme zjišťovali výskyt šikany na vybraných školách. Bylo zjištěno, že šikana se skutečně mezi žáky staršího školního věku vyskytuje.

Klíčová slova: agresivita, šikana, hostilita